

SCOTTISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CREDIT AND ACCESS

**14-06-06
Item 7
Paper 41-09**

Qualification and Curriculum Authority's "Framework for Achievement"

Purpose and recommendation

- 1 This paper aims to inform SACCA about the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's "Framework for Achievement" and update the Committee about recent developments.
- 2 SACCA is invited to note the contents of the paper and comment as appropriate.

Background and Context

- 3 In 2004 the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) issued a consultation paper to stakeholders in England regarding a new credit based qualification framework covering education from the ages of 14-19, i.e. pre-higher education, and which included vocational education. The Framework for Achievement was an attempt to address various issues raised by the White paper "21st Century Skills: realizing our potential", which set out the government's skills strategy for England. In particular, Chapter 5 (Reforming qualifications and Training Programmes) proposed that any qualification reform should be supported by a unit-based national system of credit and qualifications.
- 4 The proposal QCA put forward involved the formation of a unit-based qualification framework, where units of learning would be credit rated and assigned a level. These units of learning could build toward a qualification. It was suggested that one credit should equal 10 learning hours and that level descriptors would be build upon descriptors formulated by NICATS and previous descriptors developed by the QCA. It was proposed that this kind of system would result in a simpler and more flexible system by:
 - Developing a simpler process for developing units and qualifications
 - Encouraging and support collaboration between different users of the framework
 - Developing a unit database to help rationalize unit development
 - Developing credit values to measure the amount of achievement
 - Developing a transcript which record that achievement
 - Standardizing qualification titles
 - Allowing individual units or clusters of units to be awarded in addition to a whole qualification and awarding credit to these units
 - Allowing credit to be transferred between different qualification and awarding bodies

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- Developing flexible rules for combining credit in order to obtain a qualification.
- 5 In general, the proposals were accepted by the sector and a detailed testing and trialing phase of the proposed framework was agreed to start in May 2006 running for two years. This will be achieved by the selection of submitted projects, details of which will be published shortly.

Higher Education Involvement

- 6 In November 2005, the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, wrote to the Chair of the Joint Forum for Higher Levels (JFHL) to request that the Forum facilitate work between organizations in further education and higher education to develop a qualification and credit framework for England that incorporated higher education provision. A particular political consideration in this request was to facilitate progression between further and higher education.
- 7 The JFHL was asked specifically to undertake a programme of work by Easter 2006 which would result in the production of overarching principles and operational criteria for a common approach to credit. The report was submitted to the 12th April meeting of the JFHL with onward transmission to the Minister. The report put forward the suggestion that the draft principles and operational criteria should be tested through a series of trials throughout 2006-07. There is clearly a potential for the JFHL's work to overlap on the Burgess Group's work on the development of national credit arrangements for England, however the JFHL appear to be taking cognizance of these developments in their work. Likewise, the JFHL have taken into account the establishment of the Lifelong Learning Networks.

Relationship with Scotland and the SCQF

- 8 From the beginning the QCA have been careful to emphasize the importance of close relationships with colleagues working on the SCQF and in particular keeping an active interest on developments in the SCQF. Both the Framework for Achievement and the work with the higher education sector are clearly stipulated as being developed for the English sectors with possible expansion to include Wales and Northern Ireland at later dates. The JFHL also has two members from the Scottish sector, a representative from the SQA and the SCQF Officer.